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ART. I. — 1. *La Russie en 1839.* Par le MARQUIS DE CUSTINE. 4 vols. Seconde Edition, revue, corrigée, et augmentée. Paris. 1843.

2. *A Memoir of the Life of Peter the Great.* By JOHN BARROW, Esq., Secretary to the Admiralty. New York: Harper & Brothers. 1839.

ONE day, in the year 1697, the great Duke of Marlborough happened to be in the village of Saardam. He visited the dockyard of one Mynheer Calf, a rich ship-builder, and was struck with the appearance of a journeyman at work there. He was a large, powerful man, dressed in a red woollen shirt and duck trowsers, with a sailor's hat, and seated, with an adze in his hand, upon a rough log of timber which lay on the ground. The man's features were bold and regular, his dark brown hair fell in natural curls about his neck, his complexion was strong and ruddy, with veins somewhat distended, indicating an ardent temperament and more luxurious habits than comported with his station; and his dark, keen eye glanced from one object to another with remarkable restlessness. He was engaged in earnest conversation with some strangers, whose remarks he occasionally interrupted, while he rapidly addressed them in a guttural but not unmusical voice. As he became occasionally excited in conversation, his features twitched convulsively, the blood rushed to his forehead, his arms were tossed about with extreme violence of gesticulation, and he seemed constantly upon the point of giving way to some explosion of passion, or else of falling into a fit of catalepsy.

His companions, however, did not appear alarmed by his vehemence, although they seemed to treat him with remarkable deference ; and, after a short time, his distorted features would resume their symmetry and agreeable expression, his momentary frenzy would subside, and a bright smile would light up his whole countenance.

The Duke inquired the name of this workman, and was told it was one Pieter Baas, a foreign journeyman of remarkable mechanical abilities and great industry. Approaching, he entered into some slight conversation with him upon matters pertaining to his craft. While they were conversing, a stranger of foreign mien and costume appeared, holding a voluminous letter in his hand ; the workman started up, snatched it from his hand, tore off the seals and greedily devoured its contents, while the stately Marlborough walked away unnoticed. The Duke was well aware that, in this thin disguise, he saw the Czar of Muscovy. Pieter Baas, or Boss Peter, or Master Peter, was Peter the despot of all the Russias, a man who, having just found himself the undisputed proprietor of a quarter of the globe with all its inhabitants, had opened his eyes to the responsibilities of his position, and had voluntarily descended from his throne for the noble purpose of qualifying himself to reconsider it.

The empire of Russia, at this moment more than twice as large as Europe, having a considerable extent of seacoasts, with flourishing commercial havens both upon the Baltic and the Black seas, and a chain of internal communication, by canal and river, connecting them both with the Caspian and the Volga, was, at the accession of Peter the First, of quite sufficient dimensions for any reasonable monarch's ambition, but of most unfortunate geographical position. Shut off from civilized Western Europe by vast and thinly peopled forests and plains, having for neighbours only the sledded Polack, the Turk, the Persian, and the Chinese, and touching nowhere upon the ocean, that great highway of civilization, — the ancient empire of the Czars seemed always in a state of suffocation. Remote from the sea, it was a mammoth without lungs, incapable of performing the functions belonging to its vast organization, and presenting to the world the appearance of a huge, incomplete, and inert mass, waiting the advent of some new Prometheus to inspire it with life and light.

Its capital, the *bizarre* and fantastic Moscow, with its vast, turreted, and venerable Kremlin,—its countless churches, with their flashing spires and clustering and turbaned minarets glittering in green, purple, and gold,—its mosques, with the cross supplanting the crescent,—its streets swarming with bearded merchants and ferocious Janizaries, while its female population were immured and invisible,—was a true type of the empire, rather Asiatic than European, and yet compounded of both.

The government, too, was far more Oriental than European in its character. The Normans had, to be sure, in the eleventh century, taken possession of the Russian government with the same gentlemanlike effrontery with which, at about the same time, they had seated themselves upon every throne in Europe ; and the crown of Ruric had been transmitted like the other European crowns for many generations, till it descended through a female branch upon the head of the Romanoffs, the ancestors of Peter and the present imperial family. But though there might be said to be an established dynasty, the succession to the throne was controlled by the Strelitzes, the licentious and ungovernable soldiery of the capital, as much as the Turkish or Roman empire by the Janizaries or Pretorians ; and the history of the government was but a series of palace-revolutions, in which the sovereign, the tool alternately of the priesthood and the body-guard, was elevated, deposed, or strangled, according to the prevalence of different factions in the capital. The government was in fact, as it has been epigrammatically characterized, “a despotism tempered by assassination.”

The father of Peter the First, Alexis Michaelovitz, had indeed projected reforms in various departments of the government. He seems to have been, to a certain extent, aware of the capacity of his empire, and to have had some faint glimmerings of the responsibility which weighed upon him, as the inheritor of this vast hereditary estate. He undertook certain revisions of the laws, if the mass of contradictory and capricious edicts which formed the code deserve that name ; and his attention had particularly directed itself to the condition of the army and the church. Upon his death, in 1677, he left two sons, Theodore and John, and four daughters, by his first wife ; besides one son,

Peter, born in 1672, and one daughter, Natalia, by the second wife, of the house of Narischkin. The eldest son, Theodore, succeeded, whose administration was directed by his sister, the ambitious and intriguing princess Sophia, assisted by her paramour Galitzin. Theodore died in 1682, having named his half-brother Peter as his successor, to the exclusion of his own brother John, who was almost an idiot. Sophia, who, in the fitful and perilous history of Peter's boyhood, seems like the wicked fairy in so many Eastern fables, whose mission is constantly to perplex, and, if possible, destroy, the virtuous young prince, who, however, struggles manfully against her enchantments and her hosts of allies, and comes out triumphant at last, — Sophia, assisted by Couvanski, general of the Strelitzes, excited a tumult in the capital. Artfully inflaming the passions of the soldiery, she directed their violence against all those who stood between her and the power she aimed at ; many of the Narischkin family (the maternal relatives of Peter), with their adherents, were butchered with wholesale ferocity, many crown-officers were put to death, and the princess at length succeeded in proclaiming the idiot John and the infant Peter as joint Czars, and herself as regent.

From this time forth, Sophia, having the reins of government securely in her hand, took particular care to surround the youthful Peter with the worst influences. She exposed him systematically to temptation, she placed about him the most depraved and licentious associates, and seems to have encouraged the germination of every vicious propensity with the most fostering care. In 1689, during the absence of Prince Galitzin upon his second unsuccessful invasion of the Crimea, Peter was married, at the age of seventeen, through the influence of a faction hostile to Sophia, to a young lady of the Lapouchin family. After the return of Galitzin, a desperate revolt of the Strelitzes was concerted between their general, and Sophia and Galitzin, whose object was to seize and murder Peter. He saved himself for the second time in the Convent of the Trinity, — the usual place of refuge when the court was beleaguered, as was not unusual, by the Janizaries, — assembled around him those of the boyards and the soldiers who were attached to him, and, with the personal bravery and promptness which have descended like an heirloom in his family, defeated the conspirators at

a blow, banished Galitzin to Siberia, and locked up Sophia in a convent, where she remained till her death, fifteen years afterwards. His brother John remained nominally as joint Czar till his death in 1696.

In less than a year from this time, Peter made the acquaintance of a very remarkable man, to whom, more than to any other, Russia seems to have been indebted for the first impulse towards civilization. Happening one day to be dining at the house of the Danish minister, he was pleased with the manners and conversation of his Excellency's private secretary. This was a certain youthful Genevese adventurer, named Lefort. He had been educated for the mercantile profession and placed in a counting-house; but being of an adventurous disposition, with decided military tastes and talents, he had enlisted as a volunteer, and served with some distinction in the Low Countries. Still following his campaigning inclinations, he enlisted under a certain Colonel Verstin, who had been commissioned by the Czar Alexis to pick up some German recruits, and followed him to Archangel. Arriving there, he found that the death of Alexis had left no demand for the services either of himself or the colonel, and after escaping with difficulty transportation to Siberia, with which he seems to have been threatened for no particular reason, he followed his destiny to Moscow, where he found employment under the Danish envoy De Horn, and soon after was introduced to the Czar.

It was this young adventurer, a man of no extraordinary acquirements, but one who had had the advantage of a European education, and the genius to know its value and to reap its full benefit, — a man of wonderful power of observation, in whom intuition took the place of experience, and who possessed the rare faculty of impressing himself upon other minds with that genial warmth and force which render the impression indelible, — it was this truant Genevese clerk, who planted the first seeds in the fertile, but then utterly fallow, mind of the Czar. Geniality and sympathy were striking characteristics of both minds, and they seem to have united by a kind of elective affinity, from the first instant they were placed in neighbourhood of each other.

It was from Lefort that the Czar first learned the great superiority of the disciplined troops of Western Europe over the licentious and anarchical soldiery of Russia. It

was in concert with Lefort, that he conceived on the instant the daring plan of annihilating the Strelitzes, the body-guard which had set up and deposed the monarchs, — a plan that would have inevitably cost a less sagacious and vigorous prince his throne and life, and which he silently and cautiously matured, till, as we shall have occasion to relate, it was successfully executed. Almost immediately after his acquaintance with Lefort, he formed a regiment upon the European plan, which was to be the germ of the reformed army which he contemplated. This regiment was called the Preobrazinski body-guard, from the name of the palace, and Lefort was appointed its colonel, while the Czar entered himself as drummer.

It was to Lefort, also, that the Czar was, about this time, indebted for the acquaintance of the celebrated Menzikoff. This was another adventurer, who had great influence upon the fortunes of the empire, who sprang from the very humblest origin, and who seemed, like Lefort, to have been guided from afar by the finger of Providence to become a fit instrument to carry out the plans of Peter. The son of miserable parents upon the banks of the Volga, not even taught to read or write, Menzikoff sought his fortune in Moscow, and, at the age of fourteen, became apprentice to a pastry-cook, and earned his living as an itinerant vender of cakes and pies ; these he offered about the streets, recommending them in ditties of his own composing, which he sang in a very sweet voice. While engaged in this humble occupation, he happened one day to attract the attention of Lefort, who entered into some little conversation with him. The Swiss volunteer, who had so lately expanded into the general and admiral of Muscovy, could hardly dream, nor did he live long enough to learn, that, in that fair-haired, barefooted, sweet-voiced boy, the future prince of the empire, general, governor, regent, and almost autocrat, stood disguised before him. There really seems something inexpressibly romantic in the accidental and strange manner, in which the chief actors in the great drama of Peter's career seem to have been selected, and to have received their several parts from the great hand of fate. The youthful Menzikoff was presented by Lefort to the Czar, who was pleased with his appearance and vivacity, and made him his page, and, soon afterwards, his favorite and confidant.

At about the same time that Peter commenced his model regiment, he had also commenced building some vessels at Voroneje, with which he had already formed the design of sailing down the Don and conquering Azoff, the key to the Black Sea, from the Turks.

Nothing indicated the true instinct of Peter's genius more decidedly than the constancy with which he cultivated a love for maritime affairs. He is said in infancy to have had an almost insane fear of water ; but as there was never any special reason assigned for it, this was probably invented to make his naval progress appear more remarkable. At all events, he seems very soon to have conquered his hydrophobia, and in his boyhood appears to have found his chief amusement in paddling about the river Yausa, which passes through Moscow, in a little skiff built by a Dutchman, which had attracted his attention as being capable, unlike the flat-bottomed scows, which were the only boats with which he had been previously familiar, of sailing against the wind. Having solved the mystery of the keel, he became passionately fond of the sport, and, not satisfied with the navigation of the Yausa, nor of the lake Peipus, upon which he amused himself for a time, he could not rest till he had proceeded to Archangel, where he purchased and manned a vessel, in which he took a cruise or two upon the Frozen Ocean as far as Ponoï, upon the coast of Lapland.

Peter understood thoroughly the position of his empire, the moment he came to the throne. Previous Czars had issued a multiplicity of edicts, forbidding their subjects to go out of the empire. Peter saw that the great trouble was, that they could not get out. Both the natural gates of his realm were locked upon him, and the keys were in the hands of his enemies. When we look at the map of Russia now, we do not sufficiently appreciate the difficulties of Peter's position at his accession. To do so is to appreciate his genius and the strength of his will. While paddling in his little skiff on the Yausa, he had already determined that this great inland empire of his, whose inhabitants had never seen or heard of the ocean, should become a maritime power. He saw, that, without seaports, it could never be redeemed from its barbarism, and he was resolved to exchange its mongrel Orientalism for European civilization. Accordingly, before he had been within five hundred miles of blue water,

he made himself a sailor, and at the same time formed the plan, which he pursued with iron pertinacity to its completion, of conquering the Baltic from the Swede, and the Euxine from the Turk. Fully to see and appreciate the necessity of this measure was, in the young, neglected barbarian prince, a great indication of genius ; but the resolution to set about and accomplish this mighty scheme in the face of ten thousand obstacles constituted him a hero. He was, in fact, one of those few characters whose existence has had a considerable influence upon history. If he had not lived, Russia would very probably have been at the present moment one great Wallachia or Moldavia, — a vast wilderness, peopled by the same uncouth barbarians who even now constitute the mass of its population, and governed by a struggling, brawling, confused mob of unlettered boyards, knavish priests, and cut-throat Janizaries.

It was not so trifling a task as it may now appear, for Russia to conquer Sweden and the Sublime Porte. On the contrary, Sweden was so vastly superior in the scale of civilization, and her disciplined troops, trained for a century upon the renowned battle-fields of Europe, with a young monarch at their head who loved war as other youths love a mistress, gave her such a decided military preponderance, that she looked upon Russia with contempt. The Ottoman empire, too, was, at that time, not the rickety, decrepit state which it now is, holding itself up, like the cabman's horse, only by being kept in the shafts, and ready to drop the first moment its foreign master stops whipping ; on the contrary, in the very year in which Peter inherited the empire from his brother Theodore, 200,000 Turks besieged Vienna, and drove the Emperor Leopold in dismay from his capital. Although the downfall of the Porte may be dated from the result of that memorable campaign, yet the Sultan was then a vastly more powerful potentate than the Czar, and the project to snatch from him the citadel of Azoff, the key of the Black Sea, was one of unparalleled audacity.

But Peter had already matured the project, and was determined to execute it. He required seaports, and, having none, he determined to seize those of his neighbours. Like the "king of Bohemia with his seven castles," he was the "most unfortunate man in the world, because, having the

greatest passion for navigation and all sorts of sea affairs, he had never a seaport in all his dominions." Without stopping however, like Corporal Trim, to argue the point in casuistry, whether — Russia, like Bohemia, being an inland country — it would be consistent with divine benevolence for the ocean to inundate his neighbour's territory in order to accommodate him, he took a more expeditious method. Preferring to go to the ocean, rather than wait for the ocean to come to him, in 1695 he sailed down the Don with his vessels, and struck his first blow at *Azoff*. His campaign was unsuccessful, through the treachery and desertion of an artillery officer, named Jacob ; but as the Czar through life possessed the happy faculty of never knowing when he was beaten, he renewed his attack the next year, and carried the place with the most brilliant success. The key of the Palus Mæotis was thus in his hands, and he returned in triumph to Moscow, where he levied large sums upon the nobility and clergy, to build and sustain a fleet upon the waters he had conquered, to drive the Tartars from the Crimea, and to open and sustain a communication with Persia, through Circassia and Georgia.

Thus the first point was gained, and his foot at last touched the ocean. Moreover, the Tartars of the Crimea, who had been from time immemorial the pest of Russia, — a horde of savages, who "said their prayers but once a year, and then to a dead horse," and who had yet compelled the Muscovites to pay them an annual tribute, and had inserted in their last articles of peace the ignominious conditions, that "the Czar should hold the stirrup of their Khan, and feed his horse with oats out of his cap, if they should chance at any time to meet," — these savages were humbled at a blow, and scourged into insignificance by the master hand of Peter.

A year or two before the capture of *Azoff*, Peter had repudiated his wife. Various pretexts, such as infidelity and jealousy, have been assigned for the step ; among others, the enmity of *Menzikoff*, whom she had incensed by the accusation that he had taken her husband to visit lewd women, who had formerly been his customers for pies ; but the real reason was, that, like every one else connected with the great reformer, she opposed herself with the most besotted bigotry to all his plans. She was under the influence of the priests, and the priests, of course, opposed him. Unfortunately, the

Czar left his son Alexis in the charge of the mother, a mistake, which, as we shall see, occasioned infinite disaster.

Peter, having secured himself a seaport, sent a number of young Russians to study the arts of civilized life in Holland, Italy, and Germany ; but being convinced that he must do every thing for himself, and set the example to his subjects, he resolved to descend from his throne, and go to Holland to perfect himself in the arts, and particularly to acquire a thorough practical knowledge of maritime affairs.

Having been hitherto unrepresented in any European court, he fitted out a splendid embassy extraordinary to the States-General of Holland, — Lefort, Golownin, Voristzin, and Menzikoff being the plenipotentiaries, while the Czar accompanied them *incognito*, as *attaché* to the mission. The embassy proceeds through Esthonia and Livonia, visits Riga, — where the Swedish governor, D'Alberg, refuses permission to visit the fortifications, an indignity which Peter resolves to punish severely, — and, proceeding through Prussia, is received with great pomp by the king, at Königsberg. Here the Germans and Russians, “most potent at pottery,” meet each other with exuberant demonstrations of friendship, and there is much carousing and hard drinking. At this place, Peter leaves the embassy, travels privately and with great rapidity to Holland, and never rests till he has established himself as a journeyman in the dockyard of Mynheer Calf. From a seafaring man, named Kist, whom he had known in Archangel, he hires lodgings, consisting of a small room and kitchen, and a garret above them, and immediately commences a laborious and practical devotion to the trade which he had determined to acquire. The Czar soon became a most accomplished ship-builder. His first essay was upon a small yacht, which he purchased and refitted upon his arrival, and in which he spent all his leisure moments, sailing about in the harbour, visiting the vessels in port, and astonishing the phlegmatic Dutchmen by the agility with which he flew about among the shipping. Before his departure, he laid down and built, from his own draught and model, a sixty-gun ship, at much of the carpentry of which he worked with his own hands, and which was declared by many competent judges to be an admirable specimen of naval architecture.

But besides his proficiency so rapidly acquired in all

maritime matters, he made considerable progress in civil engineering, mathematics, and the science of fortification, besides completely mastering the Dutch language, and acquiring the miscellaneous accomplishments of tooth-drawing, blood-letting, and tapping for the dropsy. He was indefatigable in visiting every public institution, charitable, literary, or scientific, in examining the manufacturing establishments, the corn-mills, saw-mills, paper-mills, oil-factories, all of which he studied practically, with the view of immediately introducing these branches of industry into his own dominions ; and before leaving Holland, he spent some time at Texel, solely for the purpose of examining the whale-ships, and qualifying himself to instruct his subjects in this pursuit after his return. “ *Wat is dat? Dat wil ik zien,*” was his eternal exclamation to the quiet Hollanders, who looked with profound astonishment at this boisterous foreign prince, in carpenter’s disguise, flying round like a harlequin, swinging his stick over the backs of those who stood in his way, making strange grimaces, and rushing from one object to another with a restless activity of body and mind which seemed incomprehensible. He devoured every possible morsel of knowledge with unexampled voracity ; but the sequel proved that his mind had an ostrich-like digestion as well as appetite. The seeds which he collected in Holland, Germany, and England bore a rich harvest in the Scythian wildernesses, where his hand planted them on his return. Having spent about nine months in the Netherlands, he left that country for England.

His purpose in visiting England was principally to examine her navy-yards, dockyards, and maritime establishments, and to acquire some practical knowledge of English naval architecture. He did not design to work in the dockyards, but he preserved his *incognito*, although received with great attention by King William, who furthered all his plans to the utmost, and deputed the Marquis of Caermarthen, with whom the Czar became very intimate, to minister to all his wants during his residence in England. He was first lodged in York Buildings ; but afterwards, in order to be near the sea, he took possession of a house called Sayes Court, belonging to the celebrated John Evelyn, “ with a back door into the king’s yard, at Deptford ” ; there, says an old writer, “ he would often take up the carpenters’ tools, and work with

them ; and he frequently conversed with the builders, who showed him their draughts, and the method of laying down, by proportion, any ship or vessel."

It is amusing to observe the contempt with which the servant of the gentle, pastoral Evelyn writes to his master concerning his imperial tenant, and the depredations and desecrations committed upon his "most boscaresque grounds." "There is a house full of people," he says, "right nasty. The Czar lies next your library, and dines in the parlour next your study. He dines at ten o'clock, and six at night ; is very seldom at home a whole day ; very often in the king's yard, or by water, dressed in several dresses. The best parlour is pretty clean for the king to be entertained in." Moreover, in the garden at Sayes Court, there was, to use Evelyn's own language, "a glorious and refreshing object, an impregnable hedge of about four hundred feet in length, nine feet high, and five feet in diameter, at any time of the year glittering with its armed and variegated leaves ; the taller standards, at orderly distances, blushing with their natural coral" ; and through this "glorious and refreshing object," the Czar amused himself by trundling a wheelbarrow every morning for the sake of the exercise !

He visited the hospitals, and examined most of the public institutions in England ; and particularly directed his attention towards acquiring information in engineering, and collecting a body of skilful engineers and artificers to carry on the great project, which he had already matured, of opening an artificial communication, by locks and canals, between the Volga, the Don, and the Caspian ;—a design, by the way, which was denounced by the clergy and nobility of his empire, "as a piece of impiety, being to turn the streams one way, which Providence had directed another." His evenings were generally spent with the Marquis Caermarthen, with pipes, beer, and brandy, at a tavern near Tower hill, which is still called the "Czar of Muscovy."

During his stay in England, he went to see the University of Oxford, and visited many of the cathedrals and churches, and "had also the curiosity to view the Quakers and other Dissenters at their meeting-houses in the time of service." In this connection it is impossible not to quote the egregiously foolish remarks of Bishop Burnet, in his "History of his own Times."

“I waited upon him often,” says the bishop, “and was ordered, both by the king and the archbishop, to attend upon him and to offer him such information as to our religion and constitution as he might be willing to receive. I had good interpreters, so I had much free discourse with him. He is a man of a very hot temper, soon influenced, and very brutal in his passion; he raises his natural heat by drinking much brandy, which he rectifies himself with great application; he is subject to convulsive motions all over his body, and his head seems to be affected with these. He wants not capacity, and has a larger measure of knowledge than might be expected from his education, which was very indifferent; a want of judgment, with an instability of temper, appears in him but too often and too evidently. He is mechanically turned, and seems designed by nature rather *to be a ship-carpenter than a great prince*. This was his chief study and exercise while he staid here; he wrought much with his own hands, and made all about him work at the models of ships. He told me he designed a great fleet at Azoff, and with it to attack the Turkish empire; but he did not seem capable of conducting so great a design, though his conduct in his wars since this has discovered a greater genius in him than appeared at that time. He was desirous to understand our doctrine, but he did not seem *disposed to mend matters in Muscovy*. He was, indeed, resolved to encourage learning and to polish his people by sending some of them to travel in other countries, and to draw strangers to come and live among them. He seemed apprehensive still of his sister’s intrigues. There is a mixture both of passion and severity in his temper. He is resolute, but understands little of war, and seemed not at all inquisitive in that way. After I had seen him often, and had conversed much with him, I could not but adore the depth of the providence of God, that had raised up such a furious man to so absolute an authority over so great a part of the world.” — *History of his own Times*, Vol. II., pp. 221, 222.

The complacency with which the prelate speaks of this “furious man,” “designed by nature rather to be a ship-carpenter than a great prince,” who “did not seem disposed to mend matters in Muscovy,” is excessively ludicrous. Here was a youth of twenty-five, who had seen with a glance the absolute necessity of opening for his empire a pathway to the ocean, and had secured that pathway by a blow, and who now, revolving in his mind the most daring schemes of conquest over martial neighbours, and vast projects of internal improvement for his domains, had gone forth in mask

and domino from his barbarous citadel, not for a holyday pastime, but to acquire the arts of war and peace, and, like a modern Cadmus, to transplant from older regions the seeds of civilization to the barbarous wildernesses of his realm. Here was a crowned monarch, born in the purple, and, in the very heyday of his youth, exchanging his diadem and sceptre for the tools of a shipwright, while, at the same time, in his capacious brain his vast future lay as clearly imaged, and his great projects already to his imagination appeared as palpable as, long years afterwards, when completed, they became to the observation of the world ; and yet, upon the whole, the churchman thought him “ not disposed to mend matters in Muscovy,” and rather fitted by nature “ to be a ship-car-penter than a great prince.”

The Czar, before his departure from England, engaged a large number of scientific persons, at the head of whom was Ferguson, the engineer, to accompany him to Russia, to be employed upon the various works of internal improvement already projected. To all these persons he promised liberal salaries, which were never paid, and perfect liberty to depart when they chose, “ with crowns for convoy put into their purse ” ; although, in the sequel, the poor devils never got a ruble for their pains, and those who escaped assassination by some jealous Russian or other, and were able to find their way “ bootless home, and weather-beaten back,” after a few profitless years spent upon the Czar’s sluices and bridges, were to be considered fortunate.

One of the disadvantages, we suppose, of one man’s owning a whole quarter of the globe and all its inhabitants, is a tendency to think lightly of human obligations. It is useless to occupy one’s mind with engagements that no human power can enforce. The artificers, being there, might accomplish their part of the Czar’s mission to civilize, or at least to Europeanize, Russia. This was matter of consequence to the world ; their salaries were of no importance to any body but themselves. It is odd, that these persons were the first to introduce into Russia the science of reckoning by Arabic numerals, accounts having been formerly kept (and, indeed, being still kept by all shop-keepers and retail dealers) by means of balls upon a string, as billiards are marked in America. For the Czar to have introduced an improved method of account-keeping by means of the very men with

whom he intended to keep no account at all seems a superfluous piece of irony ; but so it was. He had, however, a nicer notion of what was due from one potentate to another; for, upon taking his departure from England, he took from his breeches pocket a ruby wrapped in brown paper, worth about £ 10,000, and presented it to King William. He also, in return for the agreeable hours passed with Lord Caermarthen at the “ Czar of Muscovy ” upon Tower hill, presented that nobleman with the right to license every hogshead of tobacco exported to Russia by an English company, who had paid him £ 15,000 for the monopoly, and to charge five shillings for each license.

Upon his return through Vienna, where he was entertained with great pomp, he received news of an insurrection which had broken out in Moscow, but which had already been suppressed by the energy of General Patrick Gordon. This news induced him to give up his intended visit to Italy, and to hasten back to his capital. He found, upon his arrival, that the Strelitzes, who, instigated of course by the Princess Sophia, were the authors of the revolt, had been defeated, and the ringleaders imprisoned. He immediately hung up three or four of them in front of Sophia’s window, had half a dozen more hung and quartered, and a few more broken upon the wheel. Under the circumstances, this was quite as little as a Czar who respected himself, and who proposed to remain Czar, could have done by way of retaliation upon a body of men as dangerous as these Strelitzes.

It is not singular, however, that, at that day, when the Czar of Muscovy was looked upon by Western Europeans as an Ogre who habitually breakfasted upon his subjects, these examples of wholesome severity were magnified into the most improbable fables. Korb, the secretary of the Austrian legation at Moscow, entertained his sovereign with minute details of several banquets given by Peter to the nobility and diplomatic corps, at every one of which several dozen Strelitzes were decapitated in the dining-room. He tells of one select dinner-party in particular, in which the Czar chopped off the heads of twenty with his own hands, washing down each head with a bumper of brandy, and then obliging Lefort, and several of the judges, and some of the foreign ministers, to try their hand at the sport. In short, if we could believe contemporary memorialists, the Stre-

litzes were kept in preserves like pheasants, and a grand *battue* was given once a week by the Czar to his particular friends, in which he who bagged the most game was sure to recommend himself most to the autocrat. If we were to rely upon the general tone of contemporary history, or to place any credence in circumstantial and statistical details of persons having facts within their reach, we should believe that there never was so much fun in Moscow as while these Strelitzes lasted. Residents there stated, that two thousand of them were executed in all, including those made way with by the Czar and the *dilettanti*.

Perhaps our readers may think that we are exaggerating. We can assure them that the flippancy is not ours, but history's. We should have dwelt less upon the topic, had not our friend the Marquis de Custine reproduced some of these fables with such imperturbable gravity.*

At all events, the Strelitzes were entirely crushed by these vigorous measures ; and from cutting off the heads of the Janizaries, the Czar now found leisure to cut off the petticoats and beards of his subjects. The great cause of complaint which De Custine makes against Peter is, that he sought to improve his country by importing the seeds of civilization from the older countries of Western Europe. He

* On lit dans M. de Ségur les faits suivants : " Pierre, lui même a interrogé ces criminels (les Strélitz) par la torture ; puis à l'imitation d'Iwan le Tyran, il se fait leur juge, leur bourreau ; il force ses nobles, restés fidèles, à trancher les têtes des nobles coupables, qu'ils viennent de condamner. Le cruel, du haut de son trône assiste d'un œil sec à ces exécutions ; il fait plus, il mêle aux joies des festins l'horreur des supplices. Ivre de vin et de sang, le verre d'une main, la hache de l'autre, en une seule heure, vingt libations successives marquent la chute de vingt têtes de Strélitz, qu'il abat à ses pieds, en s'enorgueillissant de son horrible adresse. L'année d'après, le contre coup, soit du soulèvement de ses Janissaires, soit de l'atrocité de leur supplice, retentit au loin dans l'Empire, et d'autres revoltes éclatent. Quatre-vingt Strélitz, chargés de chaînes, sont trainés d'Azoff à Moscou, et leurs têtes, qu'un boyard tient successivement par les cheveux, tombent encore sous la hache du Czar." *Hist. de Russie et de Pierre le Grand*, par M. le Général Comte de Ségur. — *La Russie en 1839*, par le Marquis de Custine, I. 306.

" Mais tandis que ce grand précepteur de son peuple enseignait si bien la civilité puérile aux boyards et aux marchands de Moscou, il s'abaissait lui même à la pratique des métiers les plus vils, à commencer par celui de bourreau ; on lui a vu couper vingt têtes de sa main dans une soirée ; et on l'a entendu se vanter de son adresse à ce métier, qu'il exerça avec une rare férocité lorsqu'il eut triomphé des coupables, mais encore plus malheureux Strélitz," etc. — De Custine, III. 330.

would have preferred to have had the Russians, being a Slavonic race, civilized as it were Slavonically. What this process is, and where it has been successfully put into operation, he does not inform us. As we read the history of the world, it seems to us that the arts have circled the earth, successively implanting themselves in different countries at different epochs, and producing different varieties of intellectual, moral, and physical fruit, corresponding to the myriad influences exercised upon the seed. At all events, if Peter made a mistake in importing the germs of ancient culture from more favored lands, it was a mistake he made in common with Cadmus, and Cecrops, and Theseus, and other semi-fabulous personages, — with Solon, and Lycurgus, and Pythagoras, in less crepuscular times.

Right or wrong, however, Peter was determined to *Occidentalize* his empire. The darling wish of his heart was to place himself upon the seashore, in order the more easily to Europeanize his country. In the mean time, and while awaiting a good opportunity for the “reannexation” of Ingria, Esthonia, and Livonia, provinces which had several centuries before belonged to the Russian crown, but had been ceded to, and possessed by, Sweden for ages, he began to denationalize his subjects, by putting a tax upon their beards and their petticoats. Strange to say, his subjects were so much more patriotic than their master, that the tax became very productive. Peter increased his revenue, but could not diminish the beards or petticoats. He was obliged to resort to force, and by “entertaining a score or two of tailors and barbers” at each gate of Moscow, whose business it was to fasten upon every man who entered, and to “cut his petticoats all round about,” as well as his whiskers, he at last succeeded in humanizing their costume ;—a process highly offensive, and which caused the clergy, who naturally favored the Russian nationality upon which they were fattened, to denounce him as Antichrist. At the same time, he altered the commencement of the year from the 1st of September to the 1st of January, much to the astonishment of his subjects, who wondered that the Czar could change the course of the sun. He also instituted assemblies for the encouragement of social intercourse between the sexes. But his most important undertakings were the building, under his immediate superintendence, assisted by the English offi-

cers whom he had brought with him, of a large fleet upon the Don, and the junction of that river with the Volga. About this time, he met with an irreparable loss in the death of Lefort, who perished at the early age of forty-six. Peter was profoundly afflicted by this event, and honored his remains with magnificent obsequies.

Both coasts of the gulf of Finland, together with both banks of the river Neva, up to the lake Ladoga, had been long, and were still, in possession of the Swedes. These frozen morasses were not a tempting site for a metropolis, certainly ; particularly when they happened to be in the possession of the most warlike nation of Europe, governed by the most warlike monarch, as the sequel proved, that had ever sat upon its throne. Still, Peter had determined to take possession of that coast, and already in imagination had built his capital upon those dreary solitudes, peopled only by the elk, the wolf, and the bear. This man, more than any one perhaps that ever lived, was an illustration of the power of volition. He always settled in his own mind exactly what he wanted, and then put on his wishing-cap. With him, to will was to have. Obstacles he took as a matter of course. It never seemed to occur to him to doubt the accomplishment of his purpose. For our own part, we do not admire the capital which he built, nor the place he selected ; both are mistakes, in our humble opinion, as time will prove and is proving. But it is impossible not to admire such a masterly effort of human volition as the erection of Petersburg.

In the year 1700 was formed the alliance between Augustus the Strong, elector of Saxony and king of Poland, the king of Denmark, and the Czar Peter, against Charles the Twelfth, king of Sweden, then a boy of eighteen, of whose character nothing was known, and who, it was thought probable, might be bullied. The Czar, as we know, desired Ingria and Carelia. Augustus wished to regain Esthonia and Livonia, ceded by Poland to Charles the Eleventh of Sweden ; and Denmark wished to recover Holstein and Schleswig. It soon appeared, that the allied sovereigns had got hold of the wrong man. Charles the Twelfth, to the astonishment of his own court no less than of his enemies, in one instant blazed forth a hero. He “ smote the sledded Polack,” to begin with ; then defeated the Danes ; and, hav-

ing thus despatched his two most formidable enemies in appearance, he was at leisure to devote his whole attention to the Czar, whom, however, he treated with the contempt which a thoroughbred soldier, at the head of tried and disciplined troops, naturally felt for the barbarous autocrat of barbarous hordes.

Peter, however, who knew nothing of war but in theory, with the exception of his maiden campaign of Azoff, went manfully forward to the encounter. He invaded Ingria at the head of sixty thousand men; and wishing, like Andrew Aguecheek, to “keep on the windy side of the law,” and to save appearances, he defended his invasion by the ludicrous pretext, that his ambassadors had been charged exorbitant prices for provisions on their tour through the Swedish provinces to Holland, and that he himself had been denied a sight of the citadel at Riga. Not that he wanted Riga himself, or Ingria, or Livonia, — “O, no, not at all”; — but the preposterous charges made by the butchers and bakers of Ingria were insults which could only be washed out in blood. On the 20th of September he laid siege to Narva, a strongly fortified town on the river Narowa. On the 19th of November, Charles the Twelfth fell upon Peter’s army during a tremendous snow-storm, which blew directly in their teeth, and with nine thousand soldiers completely routed and cut to pieces or captured about sixty thousand Russians. Never was a more ignominious defeat. The Russians were slaughtered like sheep, and their long petticoats prevented the survivors from running away half as fast as they wished. The consequence was, that, according to the Swedish accounts, the prisoners four times outnumbered the whole Swedish army.

One would have thought that this would have settled the Czar for a little while, and kept him quiet and reasonable. It did so. He preserved the most imperturbable *sang-froid* after his return to Moscow, and devoted himself with more zeal than ever to the junction of the Baltic and the Euxine, just at the moment when the former seemed farthest from him, and when a common man would have been “qualmish at the name” of Baltic. At the same time, reversing the commonplace doctrine, he continues in war to prepare for peace, — with one hand importing sheep from Saxony, erecting linen and paper factories, building hospitals and

founding schools, while with the other he melts all the church and convent-bells in Moscow into cannon, and makes every preparation for a vigorous campaign the ensuing season. He had not the slightest suspicion that he was beaten. He was, in fact, one of those intellectual Titans, who never feel their strength till they have been fairly struck to the earth. "I know very well," he says in his journal, "that the Swedes will have the advantage of us for a considerable time ; but they will teach us at length to beat them." And at a later period he says : — "If we had obtained a victory over the Swedes at Narva, being, as we were, so little instructed in the arts of war and policy, into what an abyss might not this good fortune have sunk us ! On the contrary, the success of the Swedes cost them very dear afterwards at Pultowa."

In the following spring, his troops obtained some trifling successes, and General Scherematoff made the memorable capture of Marienburg, in Livonia, — memorable not so much in a military point of view, as on account of a young and pretty Livonian girl, who was captured with the town. This young woman, whose Christian name was Martha, without any patronymic, or any at least that has been preserved, was born near Dorpt, and had been educated by one Dr. Gluck, a Lutheran minister at Marienburg, who pronounced her a "pattern of virtue, intelligence, and good conduct" ; she had been married the day before the battle of Marienburg to a Swedish sergeant, who fell in the action, and she now found herself alone, a friendless, helpless widow and orphan of sixteen, exposed without any protector to all the horrors of a besieged and captured town.

If a writer of fiction, with a brain fertile in extravagant and incredible romance, had chosen to describe to us this young peasant-girl, weeping half distracted among the smoking ruins of an obscure provincial town, and then, after rapidly shifting a few brilliant and tumultuous scenes in his phantasmagoria, had presented to us the same orphan girl as a crowned empress, throned upon a quarter of the world, and the sole arbitress and autocrat of thirty millions of human beings, and all this without any discovery of a concealed origin, without crime and without witchcraft, with nothing supernatural in the machinery, and nothing intricate in the plot, — should we not all have smiled at his absurd-

ity ? And yet, this captive girl became the consort of the Czar Peter, and upon his death the empress of all the Russias. The Russian General Bauer saw her, and rescued her from the dangers of the siege. She afterwards became the mistress of Menzikoff, with whom she lived till 1704, when, in the seventeenth year of her age, the Czar saw her, was captivated by her beauty, and took her for his mistress, and afterwards privately, and then publicly, married her.

It is to this epoch that belongs the abolition of the patriarchal dignity in Russia. Peter, having at a blow destroyed the Strelitzes, had long intended to annihilate the ecclesiastical power, the only balance which existed in the country to the autocracy of the sovereign. The superstition of the Russians was, and is, unbounded. Their principal saint was Saint Anthony, who, says a quaint old author, “came all the way from Rome to Novogorod by water on a millstone, sailing down the Tiber to Civita Vecchia, from thence passing through several seas to the mouth of the Neva, then went up that, and, crossing the lake Ladoga into the Volkhoff, arrived at the city before named. Besides this extraordinary voyage, he wrought several other miracles as soon as he landed where the monastery now stands that is dedicated to him ; one was, to order a company of fishermen to cast their nets into the sea ; which having done, they immediately drew up, with a great quantity of fish, a large trunk containing several church ornaments, sacred utensils, and priestly vestments for celebrating the liturgy, which the Russians, as well as the Eastern Greeks, believe was first performed at Rome in the same manner and with the same ceremonies as they themselves use at this time. The people tell you farther, that he built himself a little cell, in which he ended his days. In this place there now stands a chapel, in which they say he was buried, and that his body remains as uncorrupted as at the instant of his death. Over the door of the cell, the monks show a millstone, which they endeavour to make the ignorant people believe is the very same that the saint sailed upon from Rome, and to which great devotions were once paid, and many offerings made, till the time Peter the Great made himself sovereign pontiff.”

To this saint, or to Saint Nicolas, we forget which, letters of introduction were always addressed by the priests, and

placed in the hands of the dead when laid in their coffins. The superstition of the Russians is grosser and more puerile than that of any people purporting to be Christians. They would rather starve than eat pigeons, because the Holy Ghost assumed the form of a dove ; they dip their newborn children into the Neva in January, through holes cut in the ice, directly after the ceremony of blessing the water has been concluded by the Patriarch ; and it would be an easy but endless task to enumerate other similar absurdities. It may be supposed, that the patriarchal dignity, founded upon superstition as solid as this, would be a difficult power to contend with. It was so. The Patriarch's power was enormous. He pronounced sentence of life, and death, and torture, without intervention of any tribunal. On Palm Sunday, he rode to church upon an ass "caparisoned in white linen," at the head of a long procession of ecclesiastical and civil dignitaries, with a mitre upon his head, and "skirts of many colors, three or four ells long," borne by a band of young men ; while the Czar walked uncovered by his side, holding the bridle of the beast upon his arm.

This dignity, which had been established by a sort of accident in the year 1588, up to which time the Russian church acknowledged the supremacy of the Patriarch of Constantinople, had grown to be very distasteful to Peter. The church was the greatest possible enemy to his plans of reformation. The bigotry of its opposition to all his projects was insurmountable. Besides, it was very inconvenient that any one should have any power, or any rights, except himself. He determined to annihilate the office of Patriarch, and to place himself at the head of the church. We do not find, however, that he thought it necessary to go through an apprenticeship in this profession, as he had done in others ; but on the contrary, upon the death of the Patriarch Adrian, which happened about this time, he simply appointed himself *pontifex maximus*, and declined nominating any other Patriarch. The man who had destroyed the Janizaries, cut off the beards of his subjects, and changed the course of the sun, was also strong enough to trample the prelate's mitre in the dust. He was entirely successful in his contest with the church. The clergy made but a feeble resistance. The printing-press, to be sure, which he had first introduced into Russia, swarmed with

libels upon him, and denounced him as Antichrist ; but he was defended by others of the clergy, “ because the number six hundred and sixty-six was not found in his name, and he had not the sign of the beast.” |

Before the close of the year 1702, the troops of the Czar had driven the Swedes from the Ladoga and the Neva, and had taken possession of all the ports in Carelia and Ingria. On the 16th of May, without waiting another moment after having possessed himself of the locality, he begins to build his metropolis. One hundred thousand miserable workmen are consumed in the first twelve months, succumbing to the rigorous climate and the unhealthy position. But “ *il faut casser des œufs pour faire une omelette* ” ; in one year’s time there are thirty thousand houses in Petersburg. Never was there such a splendid improvisation. Look for a moment at a map of Russia, and say if Petersburg was not a magnificent piece of volition, — a mistake, certainly, and an extensive one, — but still a magnificent mistake. Upon a delta, formed by the dividing branches of the Neva, — upon a miserable morass half under water, without stones, without clay, without earth, without wood, without building materials of any kind, — having behind it the outlet of the lake Ladoga and its tributary swamps, and before it the gulf of Finland contracting itself into a narrow compass, and ready to deluge it with all the waters of the Baltic, whenever the southwest wind should blow a gale eight-and-forty hours, — with a climate of polar severity, and a soil as barren as an iceberg, — was not Petersburg a bold *impromptu* ? We never could look at this capital, with its imposing though monotonous architecture, its colossal squares, its vast colonnades, its endless vistas, its spires and minarets sheathed in barbaric gold and flashing in the sun, and remember the magical rapidity with which it was built, and the hundred thousand lives that were sacrificed in building it, without recalling Milton’s description of the building of Pandemonium :—

“ Anon out of the earth a fabric huge
Rose like an exhalation, ...
Built like a temple, where pilasters round
Were set, and Doric pillars overlaid
With golden architrave ; nor did there want
Cornice or frieze, with bossy sculptures graven ;
The roof was fretted gold. Not Babylon

Nor great Alcaïro such magnificence
Equalled in all their glories, to enshrine
Belus or Serapis their gods, or seat
Their kings, when Egypt with Assyria strove
In wealth and luxury. The ascending pile
Stood fixed her stately height ; and straight the doors
Opening their brazen folds discover, wide
Within, her ample spaces o'er the smooth
And level pavement."

Within a few months after the foundation of Petersburg and Cronstadt, Peter had the pleasure of piloting into his new seaport with his own hands a vessel belonging to his old friend, Cornelius Calf, of Saardam. The transfer of the seat of government, by the removal of the senate from Moscow to Petersburg, was effected a few years afterwards. Since that time, the repudiated Oriental capital of the ancient Czars, the magnificent Moscow, with her golden tiara and her Eastern robe, has sat, like Hagar in the wilderness, deserted and lonely in all her barbarian beauty. Yet even now, in many a backward look and longing sigh she reads plainly enough that she is not forgotten by her sovereign, that she is still at heart preferred, and that she will eventually triumph over her usurping and artificial rival.

The building of Petersburg in a year was, however, a mere *aside* in the great military drama that was going on. Peter founded this city as soon as he had won a place for it ; but the war still went on. While the Czar was erecting his capital, establishing woollen manufactures, and importing sheep from Saxony, Charles the Twelfth was knocking the Elector of Saxony off the Polish throne, putting Stanislaus Leckzinsky in his place, and ravaging all Poland and Saxony. The scenes of the great drama which occupied the next few years, but which we have no intention of sketching, opened in Poland, and closed on the confines of Turkey. It is a magnificent, eventful, important drama, a chapter of history which has been often written and is familiar to almost every one, and yet which would well bear handling again. There is no life of Peter which is in all respects satisfactory, which does not partake too much of eulogium or censure in its estimation of his character ; and there is none which develops with sufficient accuracy and impartiality, and in a sufficiently striking manner, the stirring events of the great Northern war. The brilliant drama enacted in the first fifteen years of the present century — forming probably the most splendid chapter

in the military history of the world, and which is still so fresh in the minds of men—has thrown into comparative oblivion the very picturesque and imposing scenes which were displayed in the first fifteen years of the eighteenth. And yet what a magnificent subject for the historical painter, what imposing personages, what dramatic catastrophes, what sudden and bewildering reverses, what wild scenery, what Salvator-like *chiaroscuro*,—dark Sarmatian forests enveloping the actors in mystery and obscurity, with flashes of light breaking upon the anxious suspense of Europe, and revealing portentous battles, sieges, and hairbreadth escapes,—what “dreadful marches” through the wilderness, what pitched combats, upon whose doubtful result hinged, as almost never before or since, the weal or woe of millions, and in which kings fought sword in hand in the hottest of the fight, with their crowns staked upon the issue !

There was always something very exciting to our imagination in the characters of the three kings who were the principal actors in the Northern war. There seemed to be a strange, fitful, mythical character about the war and the men who waged it. The Elector Augustus of Saxony, king of Poland, with his superhuman and almost fabulous physical strength, his personal bravery, his showy, chivalrous character, his world-renowned adventures in a gentler field, familiar to posterity through the records of “*La Saxe galante*,” is a striking personage. It is astonishing that such a magnificent Lothario should have chosen, for the barren honor of being elected to the Polish throne, to exchange the brilliant and voluptuous gayety of his own court for “the bloody noses and cracked crowns” which were “passing current” in Poland. But it is still more astonishing, that, having once engaged in the affair, he should have cut such a miserable figure in it. The splendid Augustus, Augustus the Strong, Augustus the Gallant, became merely the anvil for the sledgehammers of Charles and Peter. He made a fool of himself ; he disgraced himself more than it seemed possible for a human being to disgrace himself ; he humiliated himself more completely, more stupidly, because more unnecessarily, than it seemed possible for the greatest idiot, as well as the most arrant coward, to humiliate himself. He lost his crown at the very start, went down on his knees in the dirt to pick it up again, made a secret treaty with

Charles, renouncing his alliance with the Czar, deserted his ally with incredible folly just as the Russians in conjunction with his own troops were gaining a brilliant victory and entering Warsaw in triumph, concealed his shameful negotiation from his own generals, while at the same time he wrote a letter to Charles, apologizing for having gained a victory, and assuring him that he had intended to have drawn off his troops and deserted to the enemy, but that his orders had not been obeyed, and then sneaked off to Charles's camp, where, in obedience to that monarch's orders, he capped the climax of his shame by writing a letter of sincere and humble congratulation to Stanislaus Leckzinsky for supplanting him upon his own throne. Peter, in the sequel, put his crown on his head again, to be sure ; but for ever after he looked like

“ The thief,
Who from the shelf the precious diadem stole,
And put it in his pocket.”

What a pity that this man, who was deficient neither in courage nor, we suppose, in a certain amount of intellect sufficient for all ordinary purposes, should have got himself into such a scrape, merely for the sake of carrying an election over the Prince of Conti and Stanislaus ! The truth was, that, the moment he got among giants, — giants in action, like Charles and Peter, — he showed himself the pigmy he was in mind, despite his stature, his strength, and his personal bravery.

And Charles the Twelfth, the hero, the crowned gladiator, — what had he to do with the eighteenth century ? The hero of every body's boyhood, he remains a puzzle and a mystery to us in our maturer years. He seems an impossibility in the times in which he lived. On the death of Charles the Eleventh, and the commencement of the hostile movement by Russia and Denmark, the stripling sovereign seems to dilate into the vast, shadowy proportions of some ancient hero of Scandinavian Sagas. He seems like one of the ancient Norsemen, whose vocation was simply to fight, — who conquered the whole earth, not because they wanted it, but because they were sent into the world for no other earthly purpose ; a legitimate representative of the old Sea Kings, or rather an ancient Sea King himself, reappearing in the eighteenth century, with no specially defined object, and

proposing to himself no particular business in the world which he had so suddenly revisited, but to fight as much as possible, and with any body that came along. Viewed in this light, he can be judged more justly. He was out of place where he was. He would have been a magnificent hero and a useful personage six or seven hundred years earlier. He was a very mischievous character in the eighteenth century. People no longer fought in the same way as before ; they no longer fought for the fun of it ; they now had always an object in their wars. Sovereigns, however belligerent in taste, had always an eye to their interest. This was pre-eminently the case with his great antagonist, Peter. He never fought except for an object ; but sooner than relinquish the object, he would have fought till “ sun and moon were in the flat sea sunk.” He was a creator, a founder, a law-giver, as well as a warrior. He was constructive ; Charles merely destructive. The Czar was a great statesman ; Charles only a great gladiator. In war, Peter was always preparing for peace ; as for Charles, after he first started upon his career, he never seemed to have had the faintest suspicion that there was such a thing, such a *status*, as peace. He came into the world to fight, and he fought ; he lived fighting, he died fighting. He poured himself out, like a fierce torrent from his native mountains, in one wild, headlong, devastating flood. There was nothing beneficent, nothing fertilizing, in his career. His kingdom was neglected, his treasury exhausted, his subjects impoverished ; while he himself, from the admiration and wonder of Europe, became, or would have become, but for his timely death, its laughing-stock. The hero at Narva was only Bombastes Furioso at Bender.

While Charles was deposing Augustus and crowning Stanislaus, the troops of Peter were not idle. Keeping his eye ever fixed upon his great object, the Czar was adding to his domain province after province of what was then the Swedish seacoast. Dorpat and Narva are captured, and with them all Ingria, of which Peter makes the pastry-cook’s apprentice governor. Courland soon follows, and now the Czar joins his forces to those of Augustus in Poland. While he is called off to quell an insurrection in Astracan, (distances are nothing to the Czar,) Augustus seizes the opportunity to make the ignominious compact with

the Swedish king, to which we have referred, and — most shameful and perfidious part of his treason — surrenders to the vengeance of the ferocious Charles, *to the torture and the wheel*, the unfortunate General Patkul, ambassador of the Czar at the court of Augustus, who had incurred the hatred of the Swedish monarch for heading a deputation of Livonian nobles, and presenting to him a petition concerning the rights and privileges of their province. The allies of King Augustus take possession of Warsaw, while King Augustus himself is writing his congratulations to King Stanislaus.

Peter, having helped himself to almost as many Swedish provinces as he cared for, while Charles has been bullying Augustus and breaking Patkul on the wheel, is now disposed to treat for peace. The French envoy at Dresden offers his services, but Charles declines treating except at Moscow. “My brother Charles wishes to act Alexander,” says the Czar; “but he shall not find me Darius.”

Peter now conceives almost exactly the same plan by which the conqueror of the nineteenth century was entrapped and destroyed. He makes his country and climate fight for him, and retreats slowly before his advancing enemy, drawing him on step by step to a barren country, whence he could have no retreat, and where Peter could suddenly advance from his own secure position, and overwhelm him at a blow. With masterly generalship, he retreats before his hot-headed adversary, still “tempting him to the desert with his sword,” marches to Moghilef and Orsha, on the eastern bank of the Dnieper, a position in free communication with Smolensko, sends his Cossacks to lay waste the country for thirty miles round, and then orders them to join him beyond the Borysthenes. The two Northern monarchs now disappear from the eyes of anxious Europe among the wildernesses of ancient Scythia. Peter, with a hundred thousand men, well provided, and in convenient communication with his own cities and magazines, remains quiet. Charles, intent upon dictating terms at Moscow, crosses the Borysthenes with eighty thousand men. A fierce battle without results is fought on the Berezhina. Charles pushes on to Smolensko. By order of Peter, the country between the Borysthenes and Smolensko had been laid waste. At the approach of winter, the Swedish army dwindles and wastes away beneath the horrors of the iron climate. Still Charles advances, when suddenly, and to

the Czar inexplicably, he turns aside from his path, abandons his design upon Moscow, and directs his steps to the Ukraine. The mystery is solved by the news of Mazeppa's treason. The old hetman of the Cossacks deserts to Charles, promising to bring over all his troops ; he brings no one but himself ; the Cossacks scorn his treachery, and remain faithful to their Czar.

By this time it was December, the cold intense, and, the Swedish army perishing by thousands, Count Piper implores his master to halt, and go into the best winter-quarters they could find in the Ukraine. The king refuses, resolved to reduce the Ukraine, and then march to Moscow. In the month of May, after a winter spent by the Czar's forces in comfortable quarters, and by the king's exposed to all kinds of misery, Charles lays seige to Pultowa with eighteen thousand men, the remnant of his eighty thousand. On the 15th of June, 1709, the Czar appears before Pultowa, and, by feint of attack upon the Swedes, succeeds in throwing two thousand men into the place, and at length, a few days after, gives him battle, and utterly routs and destroys his army. Both the king and the Czar, throughout this

“ Dread Pultowa's day,
When fortune left the royal Swede,”

fight in the front of the battle. Several balls pierce the Czar's clothes ; while Charles, having been previously wounded in the heel, is carried through the fight upon a litter. After the total overthrow of his army, Charles escapes on horseback, with a handful of followers, and, entering the confines of Turkey, halts at Bender on the Dniester.

The battle of Pultowa and the final overthrow of Charles are followed, during the autumn and winter, by the complete conquest of Livonia, — Wiborg, Elbing, Riga, and Revel being taken early in 1710. At the same time, Peter deposes Stanislaus, and restores the illustrious Augustus.

In the mean time, Charles remains at Bender, the stipendiary of the Sultan, while Poniatowski, his emissary at the Porte, is busily intriguing to bring about a declaration of war from Turkey against the Czar. In conjunction with the Khan of the Crimean Tartars, who appeals to the Sultan's jealousy of the increasing power of Russia, and inspires him with a desire to recover Azoff and expel his encroaching neighbours from the Black Sea, the envoy succeeds.

The Grand Mufti declares that it is necessary for the Sultan to go to war with the Czar ; whereupon the Muscovite ambassador is forthwith "clapped into prison," by way of commencement of hostilities, and the war begins. Peter immediately makes a levy of one man in four, besides one "valet out of every two belonging to the nobility," makes a solemn declaration of war, and then marches at the head of forty thousand men to the frontier of Turkey. Previously to his departure, he makes a public proclamation of his previous marriage to Catharine ; and the empress, despite his earnest remonstrances, accompanies the invading army.

It is strange that the Czar, on this expedition, should have committed the same error, and placed himself in almost the same unfortunate predicament, as his adversary, Charles. Trusting to the representations and the friendship of the faithless hospodar of Moldavia, he advances rapidly, at the head of an insufficient force, into a hostile and barren country, relying for men and munitions of war upon his ally. Crossing the Pruth, he finds himself near Jassy, in a hostile country, between an army of Turks and another of Tartars, with a deep and rapid river between him and his own dominions. Forty thousand Russians are held at bay by two hundred thousand Turks and Tartars. The situation of the Czar is terrible ; annihilation seems to stare him in the face. His enemy, Charles, visits the Turkish camp in disguise, urging the Czar's destruction upon the Vizier. A destructive battle is going on unceasingly, which in three days costs him eighteen thousand men. Retreat is impossible ; no ally is near him, no succour expected. What can possibly extricate him ? Shall he dash upon the Turks at the head of his remaining forces, and cut his way through them, or die, sword in hand, in the attempt ? Shall he surrender to the overwhelming power of the Sultan's army, and be paraded at Constantinople as the captive Czar ? Tortured and perplexed, he shuts himself up alone in his tent, and falls into terrible convulsions. None of his generals dare approach him ; he has forbidden an entrance to all. Suddenly, despite of the prohibition, the captive of Marienburg stands before him. She, who at all times possessed a mysterious power to calm the spasmodic affections, half physical, half mental, to which he was subject, now appears before him

like an angel to relieve his agony, and to point out an escape from impending ruin. She suggests the idea of negotiation, which had occurred to no one, in the desperate situation in which they were placed, and which, she instinctively prophesied, would still be successful. She strips herself of her jewels, and ransacks the camp for objects of value, to form a suitable present for the Grand Vizier. The Vice-Chancellor Shaffiroff is despatched to the enemy's camp, and the apparently impossible result is a treaty of peace. Arms are suspended immediately, and soon afterwards honorable articles are signed, of which the principal are the surrender of Azoff, the exclusion of the Czar from the Black Sea, the demolition of the fortress of Taganroc, the withdrawal of the Russian soldiers from the neighbourhood of the Danube, and the promise of free passage to Charles the Twelfth through Russia to his own states.

It is unnecessary to analyze or to criticise the different motives that actuated the Vizier in acceding to an honorable negotiation, when the Czar seemed to be so completely in his power. It is sufficient that this was the surprising and fortunate result of Catharine's counsel. "Her great merit," says Voltaire, "was, that she saw the possibility of negotiation, at a moment when the generals seem to have seen nothing but an inevitable misfortune." No language can describe the rage and mortification of Charles the Twelfth at this unexpected result, — at this apparently impossible escape of his hated rival from overwhelming ruin. Hastening to the camp of the Vizier, he upbraids him, as if he had been his master, instead of his stipendiary; he expresses his profound disgust, that the Czar has not been carried to Constantinople, instead of being allowed to go home so easily. "And who will govern his empire in his absence?" asked the Vizier, with bitter irony; adding, that "it would never do to have all the sovereigns away from home." In answer to this retort, Charles grins ferociously in his face, turns on his heel, and tears the Vizier's robe with his spurs. After thus insulting the great functionary of the Sultan, he continues three years longer a pensionary upon his bounty. To the reiterated entreaties of his senate, that he would return, and attend to the pressing exigencies of his kingdom, he replies, in a style worthy of Bombastes, that he would send one of

his boots to govern them, and remains at Bender, still deluded and besotted with the idea that he should yet appear with a Turkish force before Moscow. At last, in 1714, after fighting a pitched battle, at the head of his valets, grooms, and house-servants, against a considerable Turkish army, sent to dislodge him by force, he is ignominiously expelled from the country whose hospitality he has so long outraged, and returns in the disguise of a courier to Sweden.

The Czar, upon his return to his dominions, gains a considerable victory over the Swedish fleet in the Baltic, commanding his own in person, in a line-of-battle ship of his own building. On arriving at Petersburg, he ordains a great triumphal procession to bring the captured ships, with their admirals and officers, up the Neva. At this time, he transfers the senate from Moscow to Petersburg, establishes assemblies, at which the penalty for infringement of the rules and regulations is to "empty the great eagle, a huge bowl, filled with wine and brandy," institutes the Academy of Arts and Sciences, founds the public library commenced with the one captured ("conveyed, the wise it call") from the University at Abo, sends a mission through Siberia to China, and draws up a map of his dominions, much of it with his own hand.

In 1715, after taking Stralsund, completing the conquest of Finland and Esthonia, and commanding in person the allied fleets of England, Denmark, and Russia, he makes a second tour in Europe, accompanied by Catharine. He revisits Saardam, where he is received with great enthusiasm, is entertained with great distinction in Paris, and visits the tomb of Cardinal Richelieu, where he exclaims, dropping upon his knees, "Thou great man, I would have given thee half of my dominions to have learned of thee to govern the other half." He drew up with his own hand a treaty of commerce with France, and returned through Berlin to Petersburg. The letters of the Margravine of Bayreuth from Berlin present no very flattering picture of the imperial travellers. She describes Peter as dressed plainly in a naval costume, handsome, but rude, uncouth, and of dreadful aspect; and Catharine as fat, frouzy, and vulgar, needing only to be seen to betray her obscure origin, and bedizened with chains, orders, and holy relics, "making such a *geklunk-blunk* as if an ass with bells were coming along"; she

represents them both as intolerable beggars, plundering the palace of every thing they could lay their hands on.

Peter had long ago constituted himself the head of the church, and treated with contempt the pretensions of the prelates to temporal power. When at Paris, however, he had received an elaborate petition from the Sorbonne, the object of which was to effect a reunion between the Greek and Latin churches. But the despot who had constituted himself the head, hand, heart, and conscience of his people, — who had annihilated throughout his empire every element of power adverse to his own, — who had crushed the soldiery, the nobility, and the clergy, deposed the Patriarch, and constituted himself the high-priest of his empire, — was not very likely to comply with the Sorbonne's invitation to acknowledge the supremacy of the Pope in his dominions. Nevertheless, he received their petition with great politeness.

On his return to Petersburg, he was vexed by the importunity of some of his own clergy, who clamored for the appointment of a Patriarch, on the ground that it was demanded by the people, and that it was necessary to assert the dignity and independence of the Greek church. Now there happened to be about Petersburg one Sotoff, a venerable jester of eighty-four, who had been the Czar's writing-master in his younger years, and at the age of seventy had been advanced to the dignity of buffoon. This venerable individual the Czar fixes upon for the office of Patriarch, previously creating him a prince and a pope. In order to make the office of Patriarch completely ridiculous in the eyes of the people, and to give them a little innocent recreation at the same time, he now ordains a solemn marriage between this Patriarch and a "buxom widow of thirty-four." We must ask indulgence, while we quote a short description of this funny ceremony from the old author already cited.

"The nuptials of this extraordinary couple were solemnized by the court in masks or mock show. The company consisted of about four hundred persons of both sexes. Every four persons had their proper dress and peculiar musical instruments, so that they represented a hundred different sorts of habits and music, particularly of the Asiatic nations. The four persons appointed to invite the guests were the greatest stammerers that could be found in all Russia. Old decrepit men, who were not able to walk or

stand, had been picked out to serve for bridesmen, stewards, and waiters. There were four running footmen, the most unwieldy fellows, who had been troubled with the gout most of their lives, and were so fat and bulky that they wanted others to lead them. The mock Czar of Moscow, who represented King David in his dress, instead of a harp, had a lyre with a bear-skin to play upon. He, being the chief of the company, was carried on a sort of a pageant placed on a sled, to the four corners of which were tied as many bears, which, being pricked with goads by fellows purposely appointed for it, made such a frightful roaring as well suited the confused and horrible din raised by the disagreeing instruments of the rest of the company. The Czar himself was dressed like a boor of Friesland, and skilfully beat a drum in company with three generals. In this manner, bells ringing everywhere, the ill-matched couple were attended by the masks to the altar of the great church, where they were joined in matrimony by a priest a hundred years old, who had lost his eyesight and his memory ; to supply which defect, a pair of spectacles were put upon his nose, two candles held before his eyes, and the words sounded into his ears, which he was to pronounce. From church the procession went to the Czar's palace, where the diversion lasted some days. Many strange adventures and comical accidents happened on their riding sleds through the streets, too long to be related here. Thus much may suffice to show that the Czar, among all the heavy cares of government, knew how to set apart some days for the relaxation of his mind, and how ingenious he was in the contrivance of those diversions."

We confess that we are unable to agree with the grave conclusion of the author from whom we quote. To us this "ingenious diversion" seems about as sorry a jest as we ever heard of. However, it was considered "most admirable fooling" in Moscow, and at all events, after two or three repetitions, seems to have quite cured the people of their desire for Patriarchs.

"The Czar," says Voltaire, "thus laughingly avenged twenty emperors of Germany, ten kings of France, and a host of sovereigns. This was all the fruit which the Sorbonne gathered from their not very politic idea of reuniting the Greek and Latin churches."

The darkest chapter in the life of Peter now approaches. After the lapse of a century, no one can read the account of that dreadful tragedy, the trial, condemnation, and death of the Czarowitch Alexis, without a shudder of horror. No

one can contemplate the spectacle of a son judicially condemned by his father for no crime, — no one can read the record of the solemn farce which represents the trial of the unfortunate victim, without feeling all his admiration for the extraordinary qualities of the Czar swallowed up by indignation and abhorrence. Up to this time, Peter seems a man, — a hard-hearted, despotic, inexorable man, perhaps, — but he is still human. He now seems only a machine, a huge engine of unparalleled power, placed upon the earth to effect a certain task, working its mighty arms night and day with ceaseless and untiring energy, crashing through all obstacles, and annihilating every thing in its path with the unfeeling precision of gigantic mechanism.

It was hardly to be expected, to be sure, that this tremendous despot, who had recoiled before no obstacle in the path of his settled purpose, who had strode over every thing with the step of a giant, who had given two seas to an inland empire, who had conquered the most warlike nation and sovereign of Europe with barbarians in petticoats, who had crushed the nobility, annihilated the Janizaries, trampled the Patriarch in the dust, — who had repudiated his wife, because she was attached to the old customs of Muscovy, and had married and crowned a pastry-cook's mistress, because it was his sovereign will and pleasure, — it was hardly to be expected that such a man would hesitate about disinheriting his own son, if he thought proper to do so. But it might have been hoped, that he would content himself with disinheriting him, and that the "*Pater Patriæ*," as by solemn decree he was shortly afterwards entitled, would remember that he was also father of Alexis.

This unhappy young man, the son of the repudiated wife of the Czar, seems to have been a very miserable creature. We have the fullest sympathy with the natural disappointment of Peter at the incorrigible, hopeless stupidity and profligacy of his son. Still, he had himself to blame, in a great measure, for many of his son's defects. His education had been neglected, or, rather, worse than neglected ; it had been left to the care of monks, to the care of the very order of people most wedded to the ancient state of things, and most desirous of restoring it, if possible. The necessary result of such training upon a dull boy might easily have been foreseen. There was, however, not the slightest objection

to disinheriting him ; he had no claim to the throne, and he was totally unworthy of it. There was no law of Russia designating the eldest son as successor. On the contrary, the genius of the Russian autocracy seems to vest the fee simple of all the Russias and all the Russians in the actual autocrat, to be disposed of as he sees fit, and devised to whomsoever he deems most eligible. This had been, and was then, the law, if it be worth while to talk about law, when the will of the sovereign makes and alters the law at any moment. Alexis seems to have been weak, dissolute, and intriguing, — a sot, a bigot, a liar, and a coward, — the tool of “bushy-bearded” priests and designing women, whose control of the empire had been terminated by Peter’s energetic measures. The Czar’s predominating fear was, that, at his death, the empire would relapse into the quagmire of barbarism from which he had reclaimed it. Alexis, priest-ridden and ignorant, was sure to become a tool in the hands of priests as soon as he should ascend the throne, and the old order of things would as surely be reinstated.

Peter, soon after the death of his son’s wife, (a virtuous and intelligent German princess, whose life seems to have been worn out by the neglect, cruelty, and debauchery of her husband,) remonstrates with him upon his evil courses, commands him to reform, and threatens else to disinherit him. “Amend your life, or else turn monk,” says the Czar. “I intend to embrace the monastic life,” replies the son ; “I pledge myself to do so, and only ask your gracious permission.” The Czar, just before his departure for Germany and France, visits Alexis, who was, or pretended to be, confined to his bed by sickness. The young man again renews his renunciation of the succession, and repeats his pledge to become a monk. Peter bids him take six months to consider the matter, takes an affectionate farewell of him, and sets out upon his travels. As soon as his back is turned, Alexis realizes the old distich : —

“The devil was sick, the devil a monk would be ;
The devil got well, the devil a monk was he.”

He recovers his health instantaneously, and celebrates his father’s departure by getting very drunk with a select party of friends. Seven months afterwards, the Czar writes to

him to join him at Copenhagen, if he had determined to reform his life and make himself fit for the succession ; if not, to execute his monastic plans without delay. Alexis accordingly announces his intention of going to Copenhagen, draws a heavy bill on Menzikoff for his travelling expenses, leaves Moscow, and, instead of Copenhagen, sneaks off to Vienna. The emperor of Germany, however, turns him off, and he goes to Naples. Two envoys of the Czar, Tolstoy and Romanzoff, proceed to Naples, and induce him, by ample promises of forgiveness on the part of his father, to return. The following is a part of his father's letter.

“ I write to you for the last time, to tell you that you are to execute my will, which Tolstoy and Romanzoff will announce to you on my part. *If you obey me, I assure you and I promise, in the name of God, that I will not punish you, and that, if you return, I will love you more than ever ;* but if you do not, I give you as your father, in virtue of the power which I have received from God, my eternal curse ; and as your sovereign, I assure you that I shall find the means of punishing you ; in which I hope that God will assist me, and that he will take my just cause in his hand.”

Upon the faith of this sacred promise, Alexis accompanies the two emissaries to Moscow, where they arrive on the 13th of February, 1718. The day after his arrival, the Czar, by way of keeping his promise of pardoning and loving him more than ever, calls a grand council of the senate and all the dignitaries of the empire, and there, in the most solemn, formal, and authentic manner, disinherits Alexis, deprives him of all claim to the succession, and obliges him, and all those present, to take the oath of future allegiance to his and Catharine's son Peter, then an infant, who, however, shortly afterwards died. This was the beginning of the fulfilment of his promise ; but it was only the beginning of the end. Alexis was worthless, ignorant, stupid, and depraved ; but he had committed no crime, and deserved no punishment, certainly not the punishment of death. A comfortable state of things there would be in the world, if every man who happened to have a profligate dunce of a son were to be justified in cutting his head off ; and for an autocrat and high-priest to do so seems to us a thousand times more atrocious.

However, the Czar seems to have been determined, after his first evasion, to get rid of him, and accordingly produces the charge of a conspiracy. Alexis is formally accused of conspiring against his father's life and throne, and a pack of perfectly contemptible stuff is collected together to make what was called evidence ; it consisted of confessions of his mistress, his pot-companions, and his confessor, — all upon the rack, — that he had been known to express wishes for his father's death, and to throw out hints about receiving assistance, in a certain event, from the emperor of Germany. But in the whole mess of it there is not the faintest shadow of a shade of evidence that he had ever conspired, that he had ever entertained any design, against his father ; and the necessary result, upon any candid mind, of a perusal of the evidence is a conviction of his perfect innocence of the crime charged upon him. There is not a country in the world, where there is any pretence of administering justice, in which such an accusation, supported by such evidence, would not have been hooted out of court. Still, the accusation was made, and something which they called a trial was instituted. The prince is sworn upon the Holy Evangelists to tell the whole truth, and nothing but the truth ; and he immediately begins to utter lies by the wholesale. His weak intellect seems to have been possessed and disordered by one idea, — that, if he should confess a great deal more than was expected, and make himself out much more guilty than he was supposed to be, he should perhaps obtain his pardon. Having, however, done nothing criminal, and having said nothing that could be fairly considered suspicious, he dives into the bottom of his breast, and brings up and displays his most secret thoughts by way of self-accusation. The truth seems to have been, that he was bullied to the last degree. We know the Czar to have been a man who eminently inspired awe, and Alexis was of an uncommonly sneaking disposition. As the event proved, Peter absolutely frightened his son to death. Certainly, never were the forms of judicial investigation so outraged as in this trial. The details are sickening, and we have already transgressed the indulgence of our readers. Let one or two questions, made by the prosecution, and answered by the criminal in writing, suffice as specimens of the Czar's criminal jurisprudence.

“ When you saw, in the letter of Beyer [a gossiping en-

voy from the German emperor's court, who wrote to his sovereign all the news, true or false, as fast as he picked it up], that there was a revolt in the army of Mecklenburg, you were rejoiced ; I believe that you had some view, and that you would have declared for the rebels, even in my lifetime." The answer of Alexis is, "*If the rebels had called me in your lifetime, I should probably have joined them, supposing that they had been strong enough.*" In answer to another question, he avows that "he had accused himself before God, in confession to the priest Jacques, of having wished the death of his father ; and that the confessor Jacques had replied, 'God will pardon you for it ; we all wish it as much.' "

After this farce of a trial had been enacted, the Czar, waiving his prerogative of life and death, determined to submit the case to the judgment of the clergy, judges, and high officers of state. This always seemed to us very paltry. It was an attempt to shift the responsibility of the murder off his own shoulders, where only it belonged. The council of clergy, after recognizing the Czar's power, — *jus vitæ et necis*, — which nobody ever doubted, and citing several cases from the Old Testament, recommended mercy, relying principally upon Absalom's case. It was plain they washed their hands of it. Meantime, further investigations, it was pretended, had made the matter worse ; and, on the 5th of July, the ministers, senators, and generals unanimously condemn the prince to death, leaving the sentence, of course, open to the Czar's revision, and prescribing no particular mode of execution. The sentence of death is published, Alexis is informed of it, and seems literally to have been frightened to death by it ; for, while the Czar was deliberating what course to take (and the opinion of the most indulgent — we confess not ours — seems to be that he did not intend the execution of the sentence), the unfortunate young man was carried off by a kind of apoplectic seizure, and, on the 7th of July, died contrite, receiving the sacrament and extreme unction, and imploring his father's pardon.

This account seems to be now accepted as the true one. But the Marquis de Custine, in his greediness to devour every thing that blackens the character of Russia in general, and of Peter the Great in particular, could not, of course, fail to reproduce the stories that have been told and retold, ex-

ploded and reexploded, — and which will continue, we suppose, to be told and exploded, believed in and ridiculed, to the end of time. It was not believed by many people in Europe at the time, and it is not believed by the Comte de Ségur and the Marquis de Custine now, that the prince died a natural death, — if the cataleptic convulsive fit, consequent upon extreme and protracted mental agony, which finally ended his life, can be called a natural, and not a violent, death. All sorts of stories were told at the time, each more incredible than the other, and each disproving the other. The Czar was said to have knouted him to death with his own hands, — to have poisoned him with a potion which he sent Marshal Weyde to an apothecary's shop in broad daylight to procure, — to have cut off his head, and then to have had it privately sewed on again by Madame Cramer ; — in short, to have made way with him by a variety of means, all of which could not well have been true, and all of which are, under the circumstances, extremely unlikely. To us it seems ridiculous to add a new horror to this terrible tragedy. We are not sure, either, that the supposed assassination makes the matter any worse. “ Murder most foul as at the best it is,” we are unable to see that the private murder is a whit more atrocious than the public, solemn, and judicial murder, of which the Czar stands accused and condemned to all eternity.

It certainly does not seem to have been in Peter's nature to have taken his son off by poison, or in any private way. The autocrat was a man who gloried in his own actions, in displaying the tremendous, irresistible power of his own will. He had collected all the dignity of his empire to assist at the spectacle ; he had invoked the attention of all Europe to the tragedy he proposed to enact ; he had determined to execute his son, and he did intend, we have no doubt, to murder him in the most ceremonious manner, and for the good of his country. We have not a doubt of his motives ; he thought himself actuated by the purest philanthropy ; but these expansive bosoms, which embrace the whole earth, or a third of it, in their colossal affection, are apt to be deficient in the humbler virtues of love and charity, when it comes to detail. The truth was, Peter loved his country so well that he determined to sacrifice his son to its welfare ; in other words, his heart was as hard as the nether millstone, and he

would have sacrificed twenty thousand sons rather than have been thwarted in the cherished projects of his ambitious intellect. But we confess we can conceive of no motive for the alleged assassination. It was not in the character of the emperor, and it was a piece of stupidity as well as barbarity. "If the assassination had trammelled up the consequence" of all that preceded, "then it were well"; and the deed might have been possible. But the broken faith to his son, the atrocious trial, the deliberate condemnation, could in no manner have been obliterated from the minds of men by the "deep damnation" of a secret "taking off." He had announced to the world his intention of executing his son for alleged disobedience and conspiracy; he had sent to every court in Europe copies of the judicial proceedings, ending in the condemnation of the victim; he had been publicly brandishing the sword of justice over his son's neck, and calling upon the world to witness the spectacle; and why he should have made all this parade for the mere purpose of poisoning him, knouting him, or cutting his head off, in secret, seems inexplicable.

Besides, as Voltaire very strongly urges, the different kinds of assassination alleged disprove each other, and the fact that Alexis was never alone from the moment of the condemnation to the hour of his death makes any secret execution impossible. The knouting story has not found many advocates; the poisoning and the beheading are supported about equally, and are both about equally probable. It certainly was not probable that the Czar would have sent a high officer of court to fetch the poison, and a few minutes afterwards have despatched another messenger to bid the first make great haste. This is not exactly the way in which poisoning is usually managed. And the other story, that the young man's head was cut off and then sewed on again, is so ludicrous, that it would deserve no attention but for the number of writers who have reported it upon the authority of contemporaneous gossip. At what moment the Czar found a secret opportunity to cut the head off, — how Madam Cramer found a secret opportunity to sew it on again, — how this ingenious lady, who, we suppose, had not practised this kind of needle-work as a profession, was able to fit it on so adroitly as to deceive not only the whole court, but even the patient himself, for, as far as we can understand the

story, Alexis seems to have received extreme unction and the sacrament, in presence of about a hundred witnesses, after Mrs. Cramer's job was finished, — are all matters very difficult to explain. Moreover, as we have already observed, we do not see much greater atrocity in the one case than the other. Peter's will being the only law of the land, he could do what he chose, execute his son as he chose, and by his own hand if he chose. The only law which could have any binding force over the autocrat was the law of nature, and that, to his soul of granite, was weaker than the spider's web. He was determined to sacrifice his son to the welfare of his country, and to insure the continuance of his reformation in church and state. Sacrifices of this sort have always found advocates and admirers, and are sure to be repeated on great occasions, and at rare intervals, to the end of time.

Dismissing this painful subject, we hasten to conclude this imperfect sketch of the principal events in the Czar's history. We will not dwell upon the extraordinary, but abortive, intrigues of the two arch plotters of Europe, Cardinal Alberoni and Baron Goertz, by which the Czar and the Swedish monarch were to be reconciled, and combined in a plot against George the First of England, and in favor of the Pretender. A chance bullet, from "a petty fortress and a dubious hand," at Friedrichsthal in Norway, terminates at once the life of Charles and the intrigues of Goertz. The baron, instead of taking the crown from George's head, loses his own head at Stockholm; Alberoni is turned out of Spain; and the Czar remains *in statu quo*, having been careful, throughout the whole intrigue, which was perfectly well known in England, to make the most barefaced promises of eternal friendship to the House of Hanover; and "to reiterate," as the diplomatists say, "the assurances of his distinguished consideration" for the English king, all the time that he was plotting against his throne.

The death of Charles alters the complexion of Europe. Peace, which was hardly possible during his lifetime, becomes the immediate object of all parties. The prince of Hesse, husband of Queen Ulrica, and, by cession of his wife, king of Sweden, is desirous of peace upon almost any terms which will allow of an honorable repose to his exhausted and impoverished country. Peter, having obtained possession of all the provinces he required, is ready to sheathe

the sword, on receiving proper recognition of his title to the property thus acquired ; and accordingly, after a good deal of bravado upon the Baltic between the English and Russian fleets, and the burning of some fifty or sixty Swedish villages, innumerable *châteaux*, and fifteen or twenty thousand houses, in a descent made by the Russians upon the coasts of Sweden, the war, which continues with ferocity during all the negotiations for peace, is at last brought to a conclusion by the signing of the treaty of Neustadt, on the 10th of September, 1721. By this treaty of peace, the Czar is guarantied in the possession of Livonia, Esthonia, Ingria, Carelia, Wiborg, and the many adjacent islands, and thus reaps the reward of twenty years' hard labor ; receiving, moreover, from the senate and synod, by solemn decree, — what seems insipid homage for an autocrat, — the titles of Great, Emperor, and *Pater Patriæ*.

After an interval of two years, passed in establishing woollen, paper, and glass manufactories, embellishing his capital, and regulating the internal and foreign commerce of Russia, we suddenly find him, accompanied by the faithful Catharine, descending the Volga at the head of a large army. A revolution which had broken out in Persia, in the course of which the reigning sovereign, the imbecile Hussein, finds himself hard pressed by the Affghan prince, Meer Mahmoud, offers an opportunity to Peter to possess himself of a few maritime provinces on the Caspian, to console him for the loss of Azoff consequent upon the disaster of the Pruth. A few hundred Russians, engaged in commerce at the town of Shamakia, having been cut to pieces during some of the hostile movements, he finds therein a pretext for invading Persia, and requiring satisfaction from both sovereign and rebel. Failing in this, of course, he sails from Astracan to Derbent, which town he takes possession of, and, soon afterwards, being applied to by the unhappy Sophi for protection against the Affghans, he consents to afford it, in consideration of receiving the towns of Bachu and Derbent, together with the provinces of Guilan, Mazanderan, and Asterabad. “ It is not land I want, but water,” exclaims the Czar, as he snatches these sunny provinces, the whole southern coast of the Caspian, the original kingdom of Cyrus, from the languid hand of the Persian, without the expenditure of the blood, time, and treasure which it had cost him to wrest the frozen swamps of Finland from the iron grasp of Charles.

Peter's conquests are now concluded. The Russian colossus now stands astride, from the "thrilling regions of thick-ribbed ice" on the Baltic, to the "fragrant bowers of Asterabad" on the Caspian, with a foot upon either sea. The man who had begun to gratify his passion for maritime affairs by paddling a little skiff on the Yausa, and who became, on his accession, only the barbaric sovereign of an inland and unknown country, now finds himself the lord of two seas, with a considerable navy, built almost by his own hand. It was upon his return to Petersburg from his Persian expedition, that he ordered the very skiff in which he commenced navigation to be brought from Moscow, and took occasion to give to his court an entertainment, which was called the "consecration of the Little Grandsire," that being the name he had given to the skiff. At the time of this ceremony of the consecration, the progeny of the Little Grandsire numbered already, according to the returns of the admiralty, "forty-one ships of the line, in a condition for service at sea, carrying two thousand one hundred and six guns, manned with fourteen thousand nine hundred seamen, besides a proportionate number of frigates, galleys, and other smaller craft." The little cabin, which was Peter's house while building Petersburg, still stands upon what is now called the Citadel; it is consecrated as a chapel, filled with votive offerings, and inclosed with a brick wall, and the Little Grandsire is religiously preserved within the building.

We are certainly not taken in by the colossal puerility of the Russian marine, any more than the Marquis de Custine is; and, although the descendants of the Little Grandsire are now at least double the number they were at the time of the consecration, we have not heard of any very brilliant exploits on any ocean to justify the very imposing and very Roman *rostra* which decorate the exchange at Petersburg. To use a vulgar but expressive phrase, the Russian navy has not yet set the Baltic on fire, and we doubt if it ever will. If it could thaw it a little, it would be all the better; for Cronstadt being blockaded by ice six months in the year, the navy is only paraded during the pleasant weather for the amusement of the autocrat. As long as England stands where it does, and the Russian winter remains as it is, we shall hardly fear much from the descendants of the Little Grandsire, at least till the capital is shifted to the Bosphorus.

At the same time, we are far from agreeing with the Marquis de Custine in his sweeping condemnation of Peter's policy in building Petersburg and establishing a marine. It was a thousand times better to have the Black Sea and the Baltic than nothing ; and if his successors had taken half as much pains as himself in fostering the maritime trade of the country, and if Russia, instead of all this parade of ships of the line, frigates, and steamers, could create a mercantile marine for itself, and could manage its own considerable foreign trade, now monopolized by foreign vessels, principally the English, she might still obtain the germ of a maritime population, while waiting for Constantinople. But till she learns that the strength of a navy consists in sailors and not ships, she is not likely to be a very formidable power upon the ocean, let her build as many line-of-battle ships as she chooses.

The only other interesting incident in Peter's life, which now draws rapidly to its close, was the coronation of Catharine as empress consort. This event was celebrated with extraordinary pomp, and particular stress is laid in the emperor's proclamation upon her conduct in the affair of the Pruth, and the salvation of himself and his army is attributed to her heroism and presence of mind. There seems to be little doubt, that Peter intended this solemn coronation of the empress during his lifetime — a ceremony which was not usual in Russia — to be an indication of his intention that she should succeed to the throne upon his death.

Very soon after this, having exposed himself when in a feeble state of health, by standing in the water a long time and over-exerting himself in saving the lives of some sailors and soldiers, who were near being wrecked in a storm upon the gulf of Finland, he was attacked by a painful disorder, to which he had been subject during the latter years of his life, and expired, with calmness and resignation, on the 28th of January, 1725. His sufferings during his last illness had been so intense, that he was unable to make any intelligible disposition as to the succession ; and strange to say, the possessor of this mighty empire, of which the only fundamental law was the expressed will of the sovereign, died intestate. It is in the highest degree probable, that he had intended to appoint his wife as his successor ; at any rate, assisted by the promptness of Menzikoff and her own

resolution, Catharine ascended the throne without opposition.

The disorder which thus cut off the Czar in the fifty-fourth year of his age, was an acute inflammation of the intestines and bladder ; but, as a matter of course, his death was attributed to poison. We do not observe that the Marquis de Custine has revived this story, which is matter of surprise to us, particularly as we believe that his friend, the Comte de Ségur, has adopted it in his history. The temptation to damage the character of the empress, and to represent her to posterity as an adulteress and a poisoner, was too strong to be resisted by the contemporary chroniclers. Lamberti gives us a detailed account of an intrigue of Catharine with one of her chamberlains, a melodramatic discovery made by Peter in an arbor, and a consequent determination upon his part to shut her up for life in a convent. She escaped her fate, according to the same faithful historian, in a singular manner. Peter, it appears, kept a memorandum-book, and was in the habit of making daily minutes of every thing he proposed to do ; while one of Catharine's pages was in the habit of secretly bringing his Majesty's tablets from his dressing-room for the daily inspection of the empress. The intended imprisonment of Catharine, jotted down among other memoranda, was thus revealed to her ; whereupon she incontinently poisoned him. This story has been sufficiently disproved. It is hardly worth disproving ; for it is not probable, that a man who had suddenly made this discovery of the guilt of the woman who had just been crowned as empress, and whom he had now determined to imprison for life, instead of designating her as his successor, would require to make any memorandum of the matter. And yet, we are expected to believe, that an entry was found upon Peter's tablets almost literally to this effect : — "*Mem.* To repudiate my wife, shave her head, and lock her up in a convent" ; — as if otherwise the matter would have slipped his memory. How is it possible that our friend De Custine has allowed this story to escape him ?

In the vast square of the Admiralty at St. Petersburg stands the celebrated colossal statue of Peter the Great. Around him are palaces, academies, arsenals, gorgeous temples with their light and starry cupolas floating up like paint-

ed balloons, and tall spires sheathed in gold, and flashing like pillars of fire. This place, which is large enough for half the Russian army to encamp in, is bounded upon one side by the Admiralty building, the Winter Palace, and the Hermitage, the *façades* of the three extending more than a mile ; in front of the Winter Palace rises the red, polished granite column of Alexander, the largest monolith in the world ; from the side opposite the palace radiate three great streets, lined with stately and imposing buildings, thronged with population, and intersected by canals, which are all bridged with iron ; across the square, on the side opposite the statue, stands the Isaac's Church, built of marble, bronze, granite, and gold, and standing upon a subterranean forest, more than a million large trees having been driven into the earth to form its foundation. The emperor faces the Neva, which pours its limpid waters through quays of solid granite, which for twenty-five miles line its length and that of its branches ; and beyond the river rise in full view the Bourse, the Academy of Arts and Sciences, and other imposing public edifices.

This equestrian statue has been much admired ; we think justly so. The action of the horse is uncommonly spirited and striking, and the position of the emperor dignified and natural. He waves his hand, as if, like a Scythian wizard as he was, he had just caused this mighty, swarming city, with all its palaces and temples, to rise like a vapor from the frozen morasses of the Neva with one stroke of his wand. In winter, by moonlight, when the whole scene is lighted by the still, cold radiance of a polar midnight, we defy any one to pause and gaze upon that statue without a vague sensation of awe. The Czar seems to be still presiding in sculptured silence over the colossal work of his hands ; to be still protecting his capital from the inundations of the ocean, and his empire from the flood of barbarism, which he always feared would sweep over it upon his death.

“ How shall we rank him upon glory's page ? ”

It is impossible not to admire his genius, his indomitable energy, his unconquerable will. He proposed to himself, while yet a youth, the mighty task of civilizing his country, and of converting a mongrel Asiatic empire into a powerful European state. It is difficult to place one's self in the right

position to judge him correctly. We are very far from agreeing with the Marquis de Custine, that his mistake was in importing his civilization. Russia had waited in vain quite long enough for the spontaneous and indigenous germination of the arts and sciences. Besides, in these days when steam is so rapidly approximating and assimilating the different parts of the earth to each other, when railroads are opened to the Red Sea, and steamers paddle by the Garden of Eden, it is difficult to say what nation will long retain a peculiar and appropriate civilization of its own. That the Czar opened the door to Europe and the ocean, that he erected a granite portal, a triumphal arch, upon his western frontier, is to us his greatest merit. If Russia is to be civilized, it must be through the influence of the West ; if Russia is to be free, the hymn of liberty will never be wafted to her ears from the silent deserts of Asia, or the sepulchral stillness of China. The emperor did right to descend from his Slavonic throne, and to go abroad to light the torch of civilization in more favored lands.

But while we admire the concentration of purpose which sustained him throughout his labors, we cannot help deploring the great and fundamental mistake which made them all comparatively worthless. A despot by birth, education, and temperament, he had never the most glimmering notion of the existence of a people. In Russia, then and at this day, there is not even the fiction of a people. Peter had a correct idea of the proper sources of civilization ; he knew where and how to collect the seeds ; but he forgot that there was nobody to civilize. A people may be humanized, cultivated, brought to any degree of perfection in arts, and arms, and sciences ; but he undertook to civilize a state in which there was but one man, and that man himself. The root must grow, before the branches and the foliage. Of this the autocrat had no idea. He had already annihilated the only class which was not composed of slaves. With one stroke of his sceptre he had demolished the feudal nobility, or what corresponded in a degree to the feudal nobility of Europe, and had made all social rank throughout his empire to depend upon service to himself. What was accomplished at a later day in Western Europe, in the midst of long convulsions and struggles, by the upheaving of the democracy, was effected by the autocrat at a blow. This

was a fatal error. There were slaves enough before. It was unnecessary to degrade the nobles. But the more closely we analyze Peter's character, the more cogently we are compelled to conclude, that his actuating motive was rather his own fame than the good of his country. A great peculiarity of his ambition was, that, though possessed of eminent military talents and highly successful in his campaigns, he seems to have cared but little for the *certaminis gaudia* ; to have taken but 'small delight in battles and victories for themselves ; to have cared little for conquest, beyond what he required for his settled purpose. Conquering, he never aspires to be a conqueror ; victorious over the greatest general of the age, he is ready to sheathe his sword as soon as the object of the contest is attained. His ambition was to be a founder, and he never, in victory or defeat, was once turned aside from his purpose. He was determined to advance his empire to the ocean, to create a new capital, and to implant there and throughout his empire the elements of European civilization. If his ambition had flown a little higher, had he determined to regenerate his people, the real civilization of his empire would have followed sooner than it is now likely to do. Of this he probably never dreamed. He was a despot throughout. He might have found other matters in England worthy of his attention, other institutions as intimately connected with civilization as the English naval architecture ; but he appears to have been completely indifferent to the great spectacle presented to an autocrat by a constitutional kingdom. " Are these all lawyers ? " said he, one day, when visiting the courts at Westminster. " What can be the use of so many lawyers ? I have but two in my empire, and I mean to hang one of them as soon as I get back." He certainly might as well have hung them both ; a country without law has very little need of lawyers.

It was because his country was inhabited by slaves, and not by a people, that it was necessary, in every branch of his great undertaking, to go into such infinitesimal details. Our admiration of the man's power is, to be sure, increased by a contemplation of the extraordinary versatility of his genius, its wide grasp, and its minute perception ; but we regret to see so much elephantine labor thrown away. As he felt himself to be the only man in the empire, so in his power of

labor he rises to a demigod, a Hercules. He felt that he must do every thing himself, and he did every thing. He fills every military post, from drummer to general, from cabin-boy to admiral ; with his own hand he builds ships of the line, and navigates them himself in storm and battle ; he superintends every manufactory, every academy, every hospital, every prison ; with his own hand he pulls teeth and draws up commercial treaties, — wins all his battles with his own sword, at the head of his army, and sings in the choir as chief bishop and head of his church, — models all his forts, sounds all his harbours, draws maps of his own dominions, all with his own hand, — regulates the treasury of his empire and the account-books of his shop-keepers, teaches his subjects how to behave themselves in assemblies, prescribes the length of their coat-skirts, and dictates their religious creed. If, instead of contenting himself with slaves who only aped civilization, he had striven to create a people, capable and worthy of culture, he might have spared himself all these minute details ; he would have produced less striking, instantaneous effects, but his work would have been more durable, and his fame more elevated. His was one of the monarch minds, who coin their age, and stamp it with their image and superscription ; but his glory would have been greater, if he had thought less of himself, and more of the real interests of his country. If he had attempted to convert his subjects from cattle into men, he need not have been so eternally haunted by the phantom of returning barbarism, destroying after his death all the labor of his lifetime, and which he could exorcise only by shedding the blood of his son. Viewed from this position, his colossal grandeur dwindles. It seems to us that he might have been so much more, that his possible seem to dwarf his actual achievements. He might have been the creator and the lawgiver of a people. He was, after all, only a tyrant and a city-builder. Even now, his successors avert their eyes from the West. The city of his love is already in danger from more potent elements than water. New and dangerous ideas fly through that magnificent western gateway. When the portal is closed, the keys thrown into the Baltic, and the discarded Moscow again embraced, how much fruit will be left from the foreign seeds transplanted ? When the Byzantine empire is restored, perhaps we shall

see their ripened development ; the Russians of the lower empire will be a match for the Greeks who preceded them.

Still, we repeat, it is difficult to judge him justly. He seems to have felt a certain mission confided to him by a superior power. His object he accomplished without wavering, without precipitation, without delay. We look up to him as to a giant, as we see him striding over every adversary, over every obstacle in his path. He seems in advance of his country, of his age, of himself. In his exterior he is the great prince, conqueror, reformer ; in his interior, the Muscovite, the barbarian. He was conscious of it himself. "I wish to reform my empire," he exclaimed, upon one occasion, "and I cannot reform myself." In early life, his pleasures were of the grossest character ; he was a hard drinker, and was quarrelsome in his cups. He kicked and cuffed his ministers, on one occasion was near cutting the throat of Lefort in a paroxysm of drunken anger, and was habitually caning Prince Menzikoff. But after all, he did reform himself, and, in the latter years of his life, his habits were abstemious and simple, and his days and nights were passed in labors for his country and his fame.

It is difficult to judge him justly. Perhaps it would have been impossible to have planted even the germ of civil, or even social, liberty in such a wilderness as Russia was at his accession. It was something to lift her ever so little above the waves of barbarism, where he found her "many fathoms deep." He accomplished a great deal. He made Russia a maritime country, gave her a navy and a commercial capital, and quadrupled her revenue ; he destroyed the Strelitzes, he crushed the Patriarch, he abolished the monastic institutions of his empire. If he had done nothing else, he would, for these great achievements, deserve the eternal gratitude of his country.
